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STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

June 12, 2008

**TO:** Nonpublic School Administrators

**FROM:** Carol Wolenberg, Deputy Superintendent *CW*

**SUBJECT:** Direct Certification of Children in Food Stamp Households for Free School Meals

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265), amended the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to require direct certification. Each local educational agency (LEA) must directly certify children who are members of households receiving assistance under the Food Stamp Program as eligible for free school meals, without further application, based on information provided in an electronic data file from the Department of Human Services (DHS). The direct certification requirement went into effect School Year (SY) 2007-08 for all school districts with an enrollment of 10,000 students or more in the preceding year. In SY 2008-09, the direct certification requirement applies to all LEAs that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The United States Department of Agriculture provided grant funds to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to develop a new process to ensure that all LEAs in Michigan can comply with this requirement. In August 2007, a Direct Certification Report through the Single Record Student Database/Unique Identification Code Application (SRSD/UIC Application) was available for all public school districts. For SY 2008-09, all school districts, including nonpublic schools, will be provided access to the report. *Before the direct certification report is accessible, all nonpublic schools participating in the NSLP must upload student enrollment data to the SRSD.*

The Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) has developed a template for nonpublic schools to use to simplify the uploading of student enrollment data to the SRSD. To access the template, go to [www.michigan.gov/cepi](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi). Click on MEIS Data Services and then click on Direct Certification Report from the left navigation bar. The template can be found in the section titled Direct Certification Report Help.

All student enrollment data must be uploaded before CEPI can make the direct certification report available. This process must be completed before the beginning of

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SY 2008-09, so families can be notified if their child/children are qualified for free meals through direct certification. Nonpublic schools are urged to begin entering student enrollment data into the template now so they can generate files to be uploaded to the SRSD.

The Direct Certification Report will match the student enrollment data that you have uploaded to the SRSD with data from DHS. Matched students will be automatically certified as eligible for free school meals. Each LEA must then notify these households that the children, as directly certified, are eligible for free benefits, no further application is necessary, and the household must notify the school if they do not want free school meal benefits for their children. For more information, please refer to the *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual* at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Guidance/default.htm>.

The Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) has provided additional materials on the process, as well as training materials for schools on how to access the Direct Certification Report. These materials are available at [http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,1607,7-113-986\\_46967---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,1607,7-113-986_46967---,00.html).

Questions regarding the content of this letter may be directed to CEPI Customer Support by e-mail to [cepi@michigan.gov](mailto:cepi@michigan.gov) or phone 517-335-0505 and select option "3."